

Rick Hert, Executive Director at West Michigan Tourism

**New film incentive program is about our economy, jobs and pride**

Michigan has generated jobs, business opportunities, and local excitement in recent years with the support of the film credit program. Over the past three years, 14,000 Michigan workers have been directly employed by the film and television industry. In West Michigan, we have so much to offer – great scenic locations and people actively involved in the industry. Movies like “30 Minutes or Less” were filmed in Grand Rapids. Other movies have been filmed and produced in Coopersville, Manistee and Traverse City.

This year, Michigan lowered its film tax credits in favor of direct grants and appropriated \$25 million for the program this fiscal year. Since its inception in 2008, the Michigan film incentive program has been relatively undefined. Legislation is being considered that outlines new and specific criteria for the approval of state funding. I urge the Michigan House to approve this bill so the \$25 million can be directed through incentives to film, TV and video game projects produced in the state.

The Film Office is not accepting applications until there is a clear framework in place. It is important to get a system in place that will keep the film and television industry focused on Michigan as one of the top locations to do business and maintain this growing industry. S.B. 569 provides this needed framework.

Under the bill's criteria, projects must demonstrate financial viability, and must give the number of Michigan residents to be hired, the extent to which a film promotes Michigan or tourism, whether producers use Michigan facilities or businesses, and the amount of in-state spending.

The new film incentive legislation focuses on continued industry growth and will reward film and television companies that hire Michigan workers and base their operations in the state.

I support the bill as a step to keep cameras rolling in Michigan. This is a key statewide industry that plays a vital role in our economy. As an economic development and tourism veteran, I've seen first hand that this program is about creating jobs and supporting our economy.

I was able to glance at a vendor list from a movie filmed in West Michigan and it was 30 pages long. Another production company spent \$80,000 at a local hardware store and \$20,000 was spent locally on clothing. As the CEO of the West Michigan Tourist Association, we were able to track 26,000 room nights generated from the film business in 2010 giving a direct and noticeable impact on the local economy.

We need to keep Michigan's film production industry rolling. The industry not only provides jobs and business opportunities, but it also creates pride and excitement in our state. People flock to movie and television sets all over the state to catch a glimpse of the action. The finished product is a commercial for Michigan on the big screen.

I urge the Michigan House to approve S.B. 569.

Rick Hert, Film Commissioner, West Michigan Film Office